

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 27, 1997 LB 274, 851

CLERK: 25 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the advancement of LB 851.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Just so everybody's aware of what's happening, Senator Kristensen had indicated to me that he had been authorized by Senator Warner to handle LB 886. Senator Warner...Senator Kristensen is not present at the moment. We will pass over that bill until such time as Senator Kristensen arrives. Move then to LB 274.

CLERK: (LB) 274, Mr. President, by Senator Dwite Pedersen. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 13, referred to Judiciary Committee, advanced to General File. I have no amendments to the bill.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Pedersen.

SENATOR Dw. PEDERSEN: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. This bill provides that the Department of Correctional Services shall provide an inmate with adequate access or availability to mental health therapy prior to their first parole eligibility date if psychological treatment is recommended for an inmate during their initial evaluation at the Diagnostic and Evaluation Center. Because of unforeseen circumstances such as protective custody, hospitalization, waiting lists and so forth, it is sometimes possible for an inmate to reach their first parole eligibility date without having had access to mental health therapy while incarcerated. LB 274 gives the Parole Board the option of waiving the requirement, if and only if the inmate agrees to attend and complete mental health therapy approved by the board as a condition of the parole. Having this bill in place would ensure that no inmate is denied parole eligibility because they did not have access to the mental health programs within the correctional institutions. Several years ago, I sponsored an amendment to a bill that put the same provisions in law for substance abuse treatment. That has worked well. And both the Department of Correctional Services and the Parole Board have said they have no problem with LB 274. With that, I would answer any questions and I would urge your advancement of the bill.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Vrtiska.